

(No. 6778.)

"PEARLMOOR" (S.S.).

The Merchant Shipping Act, 1894.

In the matter of a formal investigation held at the Moot Hall, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, on the 31st day of January and the 1st day of February, 1905, before NICHOLAS HENRY MARTIN and JOHN MATTHEW OUBRIDGE, Esquires, two of His Majesty's Justices of the Peace acting in and for the City and County of Newcastle-upon-Tyne, assisted by Captains K. HORE and W. B. BIGLEY (Nautical Assessors), into the circumstances attending the loss of the British steamship "PEARLMOOR," of London, off Kabliya Island, in the Arabian Sea, on the 17th day of November, 1904.

Report of Court.

The Court, having carefully inquired into the circumstances attending the above-mentioned shipping casualty, finds, for the reasons stated in the Annex hereto, that the loss of the "Pearlmoor" was caused by the Master navigating his vessel too closely to the land, relying solely upon a general small scale chart, and neglecting to consult his sailing directions. The Court finds the Master, August Peterson, alone in default, and reprimands him for his neglect.

Dated this 1st day of February, 1905.

N. H. MARTIN,
JOHN MATTHEW OUBRIDGE, } Judges.

We concur in the above Report.

KENNETT HORE,
WM. BARNETT BIGLEY, } Assessors.

Annex to the Report.

This was an inquiry into the circumstances attending the loss of the British steamship "Pearlmoor," of London, and was held at the Moot Hall, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, on the 31st January and 1st February, 1905, before Nicholas Henry Martin and John Matthew Oubridge, Esquires, assisted by Captains K. Hore and W. B. Bigley (Nautical Assessors).

Mr. Burton represented the Board of Trade, Mr. Miller the Master, Mr. Holliday the Chief Officer; while the Second Officer appeared in person, and Mr. Temperley held a watching brief for the owners.

The "Pearlmoor," official number 108,272, was a steel screw steamship of the turret type, built at Sunderland in the year 1897, by Messrs. William Doxford & Sons, Limited. She was schooner-rigged, and of the following dimensions:—Length, 340·2 ft.; breadth, 45·55 ft.; and depth in hold 28·2 ft., and was of 3,480·10 gross and 2,235 net registered amended tonnage. She was fitted with tri-compound engines of 266 horse-power, also constructed by Messrs. Doxford in the year 1897, and was owned by the Moor Line, Limited, Mr. Walter Runciman, of 86, Pilgrim Street, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, being appointed managing owner on 4th October, 1898.

She was, on the voyage in question, in good condition, and well-found and fitted with lifeboats and life-saving appliances, in accordance with the Act.

The vessel had three compasses, particulars of which are hereinafter given, the courses being set and the vessel navigated by the standard compass on the wheelhouse. They were in good order, and sufficient for the safe navigation of the vessel.

The Master was supplied with Admiralty and Blue-back charts for various parts of the world, and, in particular, with Inrie's Blue-back Chart of the Arabian Sea, dated 1897, by which he navigated the vessel from the port of Kurachee. He also had Findlay's Indian Ocean Directory.

The "Pearlmoor" left this port on 13th November last, bound for Port Said for orders, with a crew of 27 hands all-told, and no passengers, under the command of Mr. August Peterson, who held a certificate of competency as Master No. 012648.

She carried a full cargo of 5,400 tons of wheat, and her draught of water on leaving was 21 ft. 10 in. forward and 22 ft. 5 in. aft.

On leaving Kurachee a course was set S.W. $\frac{3}{4}$ W. by the standard compass, there being on S.W. and S.W. by W. points no deviation. This was continued up to 6 p.m. on the 14th, when the engines were stopped and the fires drawn to allow the engineers to make some necessary repairs to the boilers.

At 6 a.m. of the 15th the engines were again set full speed ahead, and the S.W. $\frac{3}{4}$ W. course continued, with the intention, as the master stated, of passing about 6 miles to the south-east of the Khorya Morya Islands.

The vessel steamed 8 knots when fully laden, and, it being the N.E. monsoon, the weather was fine and clear, the sea smooth, and neither wind or swell to affect her progress.

As good observations of the sun for latitude and longitude had been obtained each day since leaving, the position of the vessel was accurately found, and all went well until the 17th. No alteration was made in the course, although the vessel was on the last two days being navigated towards, and close to, the Arabian coast, by a small scale general chart of the Arabian Sea.

At noon of the 17th of November the latitude and longitude were stated by the master and mate from memory to be 17° 42' north and 56° 52' east. The log books, charts, and all papers connected with the navigation being lost with the ship, there was no documentary evidence to corroborate this; moreover, this position is a good deal to the eastward of that in which the vessel would have been in had the course from Kurachee to noon on the 17th been accurately made.

But at noon on the 17th the island of Kabliya itself was in sight, and a correct bearing of it was taken through the sight vanes of the standard compass by which they were steering. This bearing was S.W. by W. $\frac{3}{4}$ W., exactly a point to the westward of their course. The tides or current usually set to the N.W. through the islands, and, acting on the port side of the vessel, brought the course-made good from noon on a line with the hidden dangers lying some four miles E. by S. of Kabliya Island. The set of the current and the dangers off the island are clearly described in the directory which the master had with him, and, had he taken the trouble to consult it, he would have appreciated the necessity of keeping his vessel off the land, from the fact that he could not have accurately determined his position by cross-bearings while approaching the danger after noon of the 17th, because the scale of the general chart he was using was too small for that purpose.

Having noted the bearing of the island at noon, the master and the mate went below to dinner, leaving the second mate in charge. At about 1 p.m. they both returned to the bridge, the master to look out generally, the mate to relieve the second mate, as it was his watch on deck, and, as the vessel steered by steam from the top of the wheel house,

there were practically three people on look-out upon the upper bridge.

At 3.30 p.m. the mate took a bearing of the island for the first position of a four-point bearing, and then went aft to note the distance on the patent-log, so as to determine how far off the island the vessel passed. While the mate was aft the master noticed a ripple on the water ahead and a little on the port bow, which he at first took for the splash and play of fish. Then, fearing it might be some submerged wreck or hidden danger, he ordered the helm to be ported, and then hard-a-port. The mate, returning at this moment to the bridge, also noticed the ripple, nearly a-beam, and, almost immediately, the vessel struck heavily under the port-bilge forward, with a long grating noise, but did not appear to stop. The engines were at once reversed full-speed astern, and the vessel eventually stopped and listed to port. Water was found to be rushing into the fore-hold, and soundings were taken by the hand-lead, which gave $7\frac{1}{2}$, 13, and 17 fathoms. Efforts were made to ascertain the amount of damage, and where the water was coming into the fore-hold. Some 50 tons of wheat were jettisoned in order to get below, and all pumps set on immediately, but to no purpose. The vessel listed to port, and sank by the head so much that she would hardly steer. The engines were then put slow-ahead, so that the full force of the pumps could be got to bear on the water, but the increase of speed only assisted the in-rush. The boats were now swung out and got ready, and, as the water was up to the top of the fore hatchway, the deck awash, and the vessel unmanageable, the engines were stopped and the boats lowered into the water.

At 6.30 p.m. all hands left in the four boats, and, pulling off some little distance, stayed by until about 8 p.m., when she turned over to port and foundered head first. The boats then pulled out to sea for some distance and waited for daylight, and, at 9 a.m. the following morning, November 18th, they were picked up by the ss. "Aviemoor," which landed them safely at Port Said, whence they were sent home. No lives were lost.

This is a case which clearly shows the danger referred to in the Admiralty remarks on the use of charts, of navigating too closely to the coast with a small-scale chart where the islands, rocks, shoals and other dangers must necessarily be drawn so small as to make it impossible to take cross-bearings from them with sufficient accuracy to determine the position of a vessel. There was no need to pass so closely to the Khorya Morya Islands as the master attempted to do, but, had he used the ordinary care and precaution of a seaman, he would at least have consulted the directory, where the various dangers in the vicinity are clearly pointed out. The vessel admittedly struck on the small submerged rock lying to the east of the Tilly Rock, off the eastern end of Kabliya Island. This rock is shown on the Admiralty chart, and is described in the Admiralty Red Sea and Gulf of Aden Pilot and in Findlay's Directory, but it is not specifically marked on the Blue-back Charts, though the foul ground to the south end of the island is clearly indicated on the 1905 issue, and, according to the evidence of Mr. Gillie, compass adjuster and chart seller, on an issue prior to 1897, the date of the issue of the chart by which the master was navigating. But the master and officers stated that no such dangers were indicated on their chart. This seems highly improbable, but no copy of that particular issue could, according to the evidence, be procured.

However this may be, the master was sailing too close to the land, and neglected to avail himself of the means he had of ascertaining the dangers lying off the islands, while the case affords another instance of the necessity of using large-scale charts when approaching land or dangerous shoals.

While finding the master in default, the Court considered that to reprimand him would, under all the circumstances, be sufficient.

At the conclusion of the evidence the following questions were submitted on behalf of the Board of Trade. Mr. Miller and Mr. Holliday addressed the Court for their respective clients, and Mr. Burton replied:—

(1) What number of compasses had the vessel, were they in good order, and sufficient for the safe

navigation of the vessel, and when and by whom were they last adjusted?

(2) Did the master ascertain the deviation of his compasses by observation from time to time, were the errors correctly ascertained, and the proper corrections to the courses applied?

(3) Was the vessel supplied with proper and sufficient charts and sailing directions for the voyage from Kurachee to Port Said?

(4) Were proper measures taken to ascertain and verify the position of the vessel at or about noon of the 17th November last? Was a safe and proper course thereafter steered, and was due and proper allowance made for tide and currents?

(5) Where proper measures taken to ascertain and verify the position of the vessel from time to time after noon of the 17th November last?

(6) Was a good and proper look-out kept?

(7) Where and upon what did the vessel strike? Was the obstruction upon which she struck marked on the chart used by the master? Is it shown on the Admiralty chart?

(8) What was the cause of the loss of the vessel?

(9) Was the vessel navigated with proper and seamanlike care?

(10) Was the loss of the s.s. "Pearlmoor" caused by the wrongful act or default of the master, chief and second officers, or of any of them?

To which the Court replied as follows:—

(1) The vessel was supplied with three compasses, namely, a standard compass on top of the wheel-house, by which the courses were set and the vessel navigated; one in the wheelhouse; and the third, aft. They were in good order, and sufficient for the safe navigation of the vessel. There was no evidence to show they had been adjusted since 1st December, 1897, when they were professionally adjusted by Messrs. Wilson & Gillie, off the Tyne.

(2) The master stated he ascertained the deviation of the compasses by observation from time to time, that the errors were correctly ascertained, and the proper corrections to the courses applied.

On the course steered at the time of the casualty, viz., S.W. $\frac{3}{4}$ W., it appears there was no deviation on the standard compass. The compass error-book which the master stated he kept was, with the charts and rest of the papers, lost with the vessel.

(3) The master was navigating by Imrie's Blue-back Chart of the Arabian Sea, dated 1897, which was supplied by Messrs. Wilson & Gillie in that year. The master and officers stated that on this chart no dangers were indicated to the S.E. of Kabliya Island, though attention is specifically called to these dangers and the particular rock on which the vessel struck in Findlay's Indian Ocean Directory, with which the master was also supplied, though he admitted he did not refer to it.

It was stated that efforts had been made to procure a copy of the 1897 chart, both from the publisher and other sources, but no copies could be found. The rock in question is marked on the Admiralty Chart, and foul ground to the S.E. of Kabliya Island clearly indicated on Imrie's Blue-back Chart for the year 1905, and Mr. Gillie stated that these dangers were shewn on an issue of Imrie's Chart dated prior to 1897, which he had compared with the 1905 issue and found to be identical therewith. Under these circumstances, notwithstanding the evidence of the master and officers, the Court thinks it is in the highest degree improbable that the dangers referred to were not indicated on the chart by which they were navigating, and it is very unfortunate that it did not occur to the master to bring the chart away for his own justification, which he had ample opportunity to do before leaving the vessel.

(4) Proper measures were taken to ascertain the position of the vessel at noon of the 17th November last by observations of the sun, which gave Latitude $17^{\circ} 42' N.$, Longitude $56^{\circ} 52' E.$, and this position was confirmed by the bearing then taken of Kabliya Island itself, which bore S.W. by W. $\frac{3}{4}$ W. one point on the starboard bow, distant 36 miles. Assuming that the dangers referred to were not indicated on the master's chart, the course which the master was then steering, S.W. $\frac{3}{4}$ W. (mag.), and which was continued till the stranding, would appear to him safe and proper, though in fact it was not, as it ran the vessel straight on the rock.

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Under any circumstances, the course was fine, having regard to the position of the Khorya Morya Islands, and the master was not justified in steering so close to the land, relying solely on a small-scale chart and neglecting to consult his sailing directions, which would have warned him of the dangers, and of the probability of a north-west current in the vicinity.

(5) No subsequent measures were taken to ascertain and verify the vessel's position until about 3.30 p.m., when they commenced to take a four-point bearing to determine the distance of the vessel from the Kabliya Island, but, before it was completed, the vessel struck.

(6) A good and proper look-out was kept.

(7) The vessel struck upon a "small and dangerous rock" (as described in the Admiralty Sailing Directions) "awash at low water, and which usually breaks $2\frac{1}{4}$ miles eastward of Tilly Rock, with the eastern point of Kabliya bearing W. $\frac{1}{2}$ N. $3\frac{1}{2}$ miles." This obstruction is clearly marked on the Admiralty chart, with the soundings in the vicinity.

The Court has, in answer to the third question, already dealt with the point in relation to the chart by which the master was navigating.

(8) The casualty was caused by the master navigating his vessel too closely to the land, relying solely upon a general small-scale chart, and neglecting to consult his sailing directions.

(9) The vessel was not navigated with proper and seamanlike care after noon of the 17th November.

(10) The loss of the ss. "Pearlmoor" was caused by the wrongful act and default of the master, August Peterson, alone. Under all the circumstances, the Court does not deal with his certificate, but reprimands him for his neglect.

N. H. MARTIN,
JOHN MATTHEW OUBRIDGE, } Justices.

KENNETT HORE,
WM. BARNETT BIGLEY, } Assessors.

(Issued in London by the Board of Trade on the
7th day of March, 1905.)